

POSTED
10-4-13November 29, 2010
3006 Shandon Road
Rock Hill, SC 29730
(803) 324-4570Office of Regulatory Utility Staff
Consumer Services Division
Mr. Chad Campbell
401 Main Street, Suite 900
Columbia, South Carolina 29201**RECEIVED**

OCT 04 2013

PSC SC
MAIL / DMSRe: Complaint Filed with Your Office 11/19/210
Concerning Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc.
Billing Dated 11/7/2010 for Residential &
Wastewater Services at Services Address:
3006 Shandon Road, Rock Hill, SC 29730
US of SC Customer Account [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As discussed when I spoke with you on November 19, 2010, while filing a verbal complaint with your office about Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc., as referenced above, I am enclosing for your file and your investigation of this complaint copies of the following documents:

- (1) Our previous month's bill, dated 10/6/10, from Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. for water and sewer services (due 11/1/10), for the billing period 9/4/10 to 10/2/10, which was 28 days; and
- (2) One unmarked copy, with one marked copy (notes to myself in blue; items marked in red to emphasize for your attention), stapled together, of the subject bill in dispute, dated 11/7/10, due 12/1/10, for the billing period/meter reading 10/2/10 to 11/7/10, which covers 36 days; and
- (3) My letter dated November 24, 2010, to Ms. Trovinger, a supervisor in the billing department for Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc., concerning my telephone conversation with her of 11/18/10, my response to her, and explanation for withholding \$12.05 from payment of this most recent billing.

After writing and mailing my letter to Ms. Trovinger, we received a recorded message from Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. on Wednesday, November 24, 2010, at approximately 4:00 P.M. (or later) stating, in part: that with respect to the statement from Utilities Services of South Carolina, dated 11/7/10, the increased charges on that billing were because the days in the billing cycle exceeded their 25-35-day time frame used by the company, which caused a proration on the customer's bill; and you will see a credit adjustment on your next bill. This recorded "newest explanation" does not match what Ms. Trovinger told me on 11/18/10 ("US of SC has a 30-day billing cycle/anything over 30 days is pro-rated"); nor does it even match what US of SC actually billed on the 11/7/10 statement (a proration of 6 days over a 30-day ceiling instead of a "1 day proration over a 35-day" alleged billing cycle): e.g., $\$16.53 + 30 \text{ days} = \$5.51 \text{ per day} \times 6 \text{ days} = \$3.31 + \$16.53 = \19.84 (base water charge, 11/7/10 statement); and $\$41.39 + 30 \text{ days} = \$1.379 \text{ per day} \times 6 \text{ days} = \$8.28 + \$41.39 = \49.67 (wastewater fee, 11/7/10). The computer generated robo-call made the 4th different "explanation" I have been given by the company. As noted in my letter to Ms. Trovinger, the customers of US of SC have no control over the company's meter reading/billing schedules, which over the last 6 years have ranged from 24 to 38 days per "monthly" statement; and this apparently new (and unauthorized) practice of "proration" by USofSC was begun without warning or explanation to customers.

This raises another related problem which I would like to add to my billing complaint: the totally inadequate and uninformed "customer service" by Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. with regard to my inquiries about this matter. Please note that the phone numbers printed on our statements for "Collections", "Phone", and "Customer service" are all the same number: (1)(800) 367-4314. South Carolina customers are not given a direct phone number nor an office address for this company doing business in South Carolina. Neither, apparently, are our

Office of Regulatory Utility Staff,
Consumer Services Division,
Attn: Mr. Chad Campbell

Re: Utilities Services of SC, Inc.,

11/7/10 Billing Problem

November 29, 2010

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Questions re-directed to any internal, separate department or person specifically for South Carolina customers (?)
One individual told me she was speaking from Florida; while I suspect others may have been speaking from Maine (see addresses on payment coupon). I spent an entire day, November 18, 2010, trying to get an answer to my questions from Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. about this billing problem with the 11/7/10 statement. This involved being placed on hold both before and during my telephone calls; being passed off to other individuals who were not knowledgeable and were without authority to resolve the problem anyway; being told once there was no "supervisor" at the general, "customer service number"; yet later, in another attempted call to anyone in "billing", being transferred eventually to the voice mail of a supervisor. Of the three different "representatives" I spoke with or any significant amount of time, I received three different answers to my same question. My neighbors advise that they had similar difficulties and experiences in calling Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc.; and some reportedly encountered rudeness, with one neighbor/customer being threatened with having his water shut off if he disputed bill was not paid. I have encouraged neighbors to report any poor customer "service" encounters as part of their own, individual billing complaints filed with your office.

It is regrettable that the actions of the company, Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc., have made it necessary for us to file complaints with respect to the company's billing statement of 11/7/10 for water and sewer delivery within the Shandon Subdivision. This over charging occurred unilaterally by the company, without any notice or explanation to its customers; and appears to be a practice the company intends to continue in the future. Whether the company's "proration" of flat fee/base service charges (with adjustments in the DHEC fee) are based on "6 days over 30" or "1 day over 35", their accounting theory is immaterial. I believe the issue is that Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. cannot pro-rate even .01 cent more than the monthly flat fees, base service charges, or rates for water and sewer set by the statutory authority and procedures of the Public Service Commission of South Carolina. I would greatly appreciate the Office of Regulatory Utility Staff investigating and resolving this issue, both for present and future purposes, which affects our household and others in the Shandon Subdivision of York County; and, perhaps, other areas within South Carolina where Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc. operates as well. Thank you for your courtesy and efforts in resolving this problem.

Very truly yours,

Linda H. Fick

Linda H. Fick

Enclosures



UNMARKED
Bill in dispute

EXHIBIT A, P 3
Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc
Phone: (800) 387-4314
Collections: (800) 387-4314
Customer Service: (800) 387-4314
www.uswater.com

Bill Date	Account Number	Due Date	Please Pay:
11/07/2010		12/2/2010	\$ 81.66

Name EARL FICK

Primary Telephone #

Service Address 3006 SHANDON RD, ROCK HILL, SC, 29730

Activity Since Last Bill

Previous Balance	\$65.12
Payments received as of 11/07/2010	\$-65.12
Balance as of 11/07/2010	\$0.00

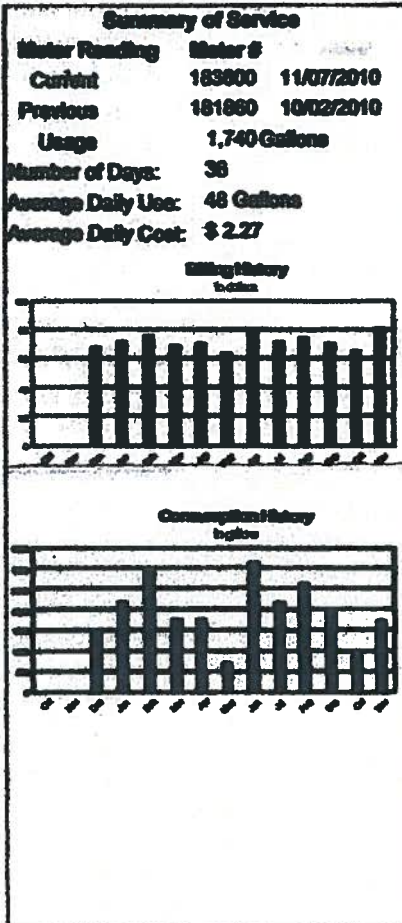
Residential Water Service

Water Base Charge	\$19.84
1,740 gallons at \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons	\$9.40
SC DHEC Fee	\$2.75
Total Residential Water Service	\$31.99

Residential Wastewater

Wastewater Service	\$49.67
Total Residential Wastewater	\$49.67

Total Amount Due	\$81.66
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A fee of 1.5% per month will be added if unpaid by the due date.
Make check payable to: Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc

Messages

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new Web Self-Service site. The site will allow you to obtain current and historical account information. The site may be accessed by going to <http://www.uswater.com/myaccount>.



PO BOX 160609
Altamonte Springs, FL 32716

* Per phone call AND
SEPARATE letter to
Ms. TROVINGER, Supervisor,
Billing Department.



Account Number:

Due Date: 12/2/2010

Please Pay: \$ 81.66

Amount Paid

\$69.61*

EARL FICK
3006 SHANDON RD
ROCK HILL SC 29730

Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc
PO Box 11025
Lewiston ME 04243-9476
|||||

☐ Address correction requested on back

2nd 11/13/11 11:15 AM

Utilities, Inc.

paid
\$69.61
11/24/11
After phone calls to →
phone calls to → TRUS
AND Letter 11/24/11 to →
(separate 2 to Roving)

Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc
 Phone: (800) 357-4314
 Collections: (800) 357-4314
 Customer Service: (800) 357-4314
 www.uhwater.com

Bill Date	Account Number	Due Date	Amount Due
11/07/2010		12/2/2010	\$ 81.66

Name **EARL FICK**
 Service Address **3006 SHANDON RD, ROCK HILL, SC, 29730**
 Activity Since Last Bill

Primary Telephone #

Previous Balance \$65.12
 Payments received as of 11/07/2010 \$65.12
 Balance as of 11/07/2010 \$0.00

Residential Water Service

Water Base Charge < \$18.84
 1,740 gallons at \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons \$9.40
 SC DHEC Fee < \$2.75
 Total Residential Water Service \$31.99

Residential Wastewater

Wastewater Service < \$48.67
 Total Residential Wastewater \$48.67

Total Amount Due

\$81.66

- 12.05

* PAID → \$69.61
 11/24/11

Sec Notes & Letters
 Phone
 Re: Unauthorized
 merchandise

Summary of Service

Water Reading	Water #
Current 182800	11/07/2010
Previous 181800	10/02/2010
Usage	1,740 Gallons
Number of Days:	35
Average Daily Use:	49 Gallons
Average Daily Cost:	\$ 2.27

Usage History

Consumption History

A fee of 1.5% per month will be added if unpaid by the due date.
 Make check payable to: **Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc**

Messages

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new Web Self-Service site. The site will allow you to obtain current and historical account information. The site may be accessed by going to <http://www.uhwater.com/mysaccount>.

Utilities, Inc.

PO BOX 160609
 Altamonte Springs, FL 32716

Account Number:

Due Date: 12/2/2010

Please Pay: \$ 81.66

Amount Paid

\$69.61 *

EARL FICK
 3006 SHANDON RD
 ROCK HILL SC 29730

Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc

PO Box 11025
 Lewiston ME 04243-9478

☐ Address correction requested on back

Previous Month's Bill, Dated 10/6/2010

Note: The charges for water base (\$16.53) and water consumption (\$5.40/1,000 gals.) are themselves "temporary" increased amounts being charged by the Company UNDER BOND, pending their Appeal of PSC's denial of Company's last Application for increases.

	Prior To 4/2006	INCREASE 4/2006	Proposed INCREASE 2007-2016 - W/S DENIED PSC ORDER #2005-96 2/4/08	INTERIM INCREASES By Company UNDER BOND ON APPEAL (to SC Sup Ct. - still pending) COMMENTED 6/2008 By Co
WATER BASE CHARGE	\$ 9.00	\$ 14.39	\$ 21.51	\$ 16.53
CONSUMPTION FEE /1,000 gals.	\$ 2.60/1,000	\$ 3.91/1,000	\$ 5.43/1,000	\$ 5.40/1,000
WASTEWATER SERVICE	\$ 25.00	\$ 41.39	\$ 46.11	\$ 41.39

(+ Related DHEC Fee Changes)

Utilities, Inc.

PAID
10/25/10
AF

Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc
Collections: (800) 367-4314
Phone: (800) 367-4314
Customer Service: (800) 367-4314
www.utwater.com

Bill Date	Account Number	Due Date	Please Pay:
10/06/2010		11/1/2010	\$ 65.12

Name EARL FICK Primary Telephone #

Service Address 3006 SHANDON RD, ROCK HILL, SC, 29730

Activity Since Last Bill

Previous Balance \$70.79
Payments received as of 10/06/2010 \$-70.79
Balance as of 10/06/2010 \$0.00

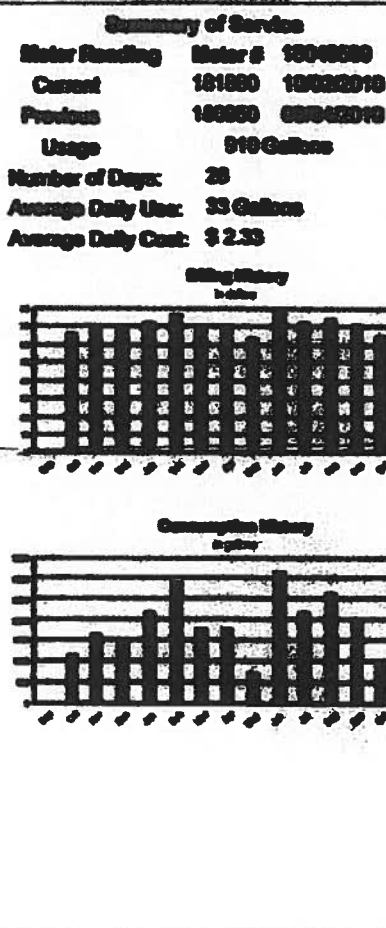
Residential Water Service

Water Base Charge \$16.53
910 gallons at \$5.40 per 1,000 gallons \$4.91
SC DHEC Fee \$2.29
Total Residential Water Service \$23.73

Residential Wastewater

Wastewater Service \$41.39
Total Residential Wastewater \$41.39

Total Amount Due \$65.12



A fee of 1.5% per month will be added if unpaid by the due date.
Make check payable to: Utilities Services of South Carolina Inc

Messages

As. Ferre Trovinger, Supervisor
Billing Department
Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc.
P. O. Box 160609
Altamonte Springs, FL 32716

November 24, 2010

As. Ferre Trovinger, Supervisor
Billing Department
Utilities Services of South Carolina, Inc.
P. O. Box 11025
Brewster, ME 04243-9476

Re: Customer

Service Address: 3006 Shandon Road
Rock Hill, SC 29732
Earl Fick/Linda Fick

Your Billing Statement Dated: 11/7/2010
for residential water & wastewater service
Billing Error

Dear Ms. Trovinger:

This letter is to confirm and expand upon our telephone conversation of November 18, 2010, concerning the most recent billing statement from your Company dated 11/7/2010, received by us on November 13 or 15, which is due 12/2/2010, and covers the billing/meter reading cycle from 10/2/10 to 11/7/10, in the total amount of \$81.66. This amount represents a 20% increase made by the Company unilaterally in both the water base charge and the wastewater service charge, and caused an increase in the related DHEC fee, over the previous 2010 billings (the most recent previous billing being dated 10/6/2010, as shown below). Therefore, we have paid our water/sewer bill for this month (under a separate mailing) in the total amount of \$69.61, and have withheld payment of the disputed amount of \$12.05:

"Water Base Charge"	\$19.84 (vs. \$16.53) = +\$3.31	Your Total Billing:	\$81.66
"Wastewater Service"	\$49.57 (vs. \$41.39) = +\$8.28	Less Disputed Amount:	<u>- 12.05</u>
"SC DHEC Fee"	\$ 2.75 (vs. \$ 2.29) = +\$.46	Total Amount We Paid:	\$69.61

These increased amounts are not a result of usage or consumption amounts (which normally do fluctuate), but rather are increases to fixed monthly base amounts which are not subject to change on a monthly billing basis. When we spoke on the 18th, you explained that "this month's increases by Utilities Services of South Carolina's are due to their proration of the base/flat fees because this statement's billing cycle (meter reading) is 36 days, and any cycle of more than 30 days 'triggers' a pro-rata increase in the base monthly rates; but 'short' cycle bills less than 30 days are not reduced because the 'monthly' rate has an 'up to 30-day basis.'" You did offer to "spread this increase over this and next month's bill for us". However, as I explained, this is not an individual "payment" problem; it is a problem with the Company's billing practice resulting in an overcharge of \$12.05, which I do not believe we owe (nor would our similarly billed neighbors in the Shandon Subdivision, of York County, SC). The Company has not applied this billing practice in the past; and we cannot control their meter reading schedule. In fact, over the past 6 years, your billing cycle/meter reading schedule has ranged anywhere from 24 to 38 days per "monthly" statement. A flat fee/base rate charge is just that: a once monthly billing charge of a set fee or rate established by and through the Public Service Commission of South Carolina and its statutory procedures. Your Company's arbitrary, internal change in accounting theory, billing practices, or meter reading schedules cannot change these set monthly charges. To do so would result in random overcharges to customers, without notice, at the whim of the Company's schedule, and by-passing the Public Service Commission's sole authority to set fees and rates.

Ms. Ferre Trovinger, Supervisor
Re: Water/Sewer Billing Error
November 24, 2010
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Therefore, I have withheld payment to the Company on this billing in the disputed amount of \$12.05; and have filed a complaint with the Office of Regulatory Utility Staff (Consumer Services Division), asking them to investigate the discrepancy as noted in this bill, as well as the Company's application of this accounting theory to billing cycle/meter reading practices in the future, on behalf of our household and any others similarly affected in the Shandon Subdivision.

Very truly yours,

Linda H. Fick

Linda H. Fick

Cc:w/end. Office of Regulatory Utility Staff
Consumer Services Division
Attn: Mr. Chad Campbell
1401 Main Street, Suite 900
Columbia, South Carolina 29201